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FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Conservation Community

Finding: (*i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts*)

There is a need to perform more appropriate thinning in the Basin's forests to achieve ecological and fire-related forest health goals.

Background and Supporting Evidence: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

Research, including behavioral assessments of wildland fires (including the Angora Fire), has shown that appropriate thinning of smaller diameter trees and surface and ladder fuels can reduce fire severity to a surface or ground level fire when done correctly. Where not enough material is removed, fire danger increases. Alternatively, where too much material is removed, especially in the form of large diameter trees, fire danger is increased. Thus there is an appropriate level of thinning in between these two extremes which can reduce fire danger and severity.

Unfortunately, there has been a great deal of pressure (not just in the Basin) to remove large diameter trees, or thin more than is necessary for financial incentives, such as commercial logging. Not only can this increase fire danger, but it also harms the Basin's environment and diminishes many of TRPA's environmental threshold carrying capacity standards, which were created to protect Tahoe's unique beauty and ecological function. When projects propose to remove trees to this unhealthy extreme, there is, as the project proponents know to expect, opposition to the project so the work may be delayed, whereas, when projects propose activities that meet what science dictates to be the appropriate level of thinning, projects move forward and are implemented (and as the Angora Fire proved, successful).

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

1. **Forest/fuels thinning projects are based on what scientific data and appropriate fire models have shown is necessary to achieve fuels reduction and forest health goals so that the appropriate level of thinning is done in a timely manner.**

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas)***:**

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

☐ Cost
   No cost impact from this recommendation.
☐ Funding source
☐ Staffing

☐ Existing regulations and/or laws
 This recommendation supports regulations protecting forests in the Basin.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

☐ Operational
☐ Social
☐ Political
☐ Policy
☐ Health and Safety   - This recommendation promotes thinning projects that will help reduce future wildland fires to ground level fires; in conjunction with adequate community protections (full compliance with defensible space, ember-resistant structures and completion of adequate fuel breaks), this recommendation would help Tahoe become a fire-resilient landscape where fires can occur without threatening homes.
☐ Environmental
☐ Interagency